10/28/77

Ray's Escape Trial Opens With Rebuff To Defense Lawyer

WARTBURG, Tenn., Oct. 27 (AP)—A riminal Court judge today rebuffed ames Earl Ray's initial attempt to turn e convicted assassin's escape trial into forum to discuss the murder of the ev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

But Mr. Ray's attorneys said they still oped to present testimony on their ient's 1969 guilty plea to the Memphis laying, and thus make the murder charge issue in the current trial, in which Ir. Ray is charged with escaping from rushy Mountain Penitentiary last June 0.

At the court session, a nine-man, three-oman ury was selected.

Before the trial began, Mr. Ray's attor-ey, Mark Lane, said he would argue that is client was illegally confined and herefore not guilty of illegal escape.

The trial is being conducted at the Mor-an County Vocational School because he country courthouse is being remod-led. Security was tight around the build-ng, which is about 10 miles from the penitentiary.

Mr. Lane had hoped to show that Mr. Ray was deprived of a fair trial in Mem-phis in 1969, when he pleaded guilty in court in Shelby County to the slaying of Dr. King in Memphis on April 4, 1968, and was sentenced to 99 years in prison.

"I have no intention to provide a forum for Mr. Ray to issue his complaints against the system, the Shelby County authorities or anybody else," Judge Lee Asbury said, "I believe that the law is very narrow in this case."

Chicopee Tri-City Times